Report to the City of Columbus
2002 Citizen Satisfaction Survey

1. Introduction

For the past two decades, citizens across the United States have increasingly demanded better quality public services for their tax dollars. Continued pressure to improve and document government performance lead the City of Columbus to become one of the first metropolitan Midwestern cities to implement a citizen satisfaction survey in 1994. Unlike many other cities, however, the City of Columbus has remained committed to using citizen satisfaction data as a means to assess and improve the management of city services. In particular, the City uses the results from the survey to track its progress towards achieving the goals outlined in the Columbus Covenant. In addition, the results serve as a measure for individual departments as they assess whether they are meeting department level performance measures. Based on data from subsequent satisfaction surveys in 1995, 1996, 1998, and 2000, the City of Columbus is able to track the quality of various public services and target areas for improvement.

This year, 2002, the City of Columbus is once again a pioneer in urban government management. The implementation of the 2002 survey marks a significant shift in how the survey data are collected, analyzed, and reported. To date the City of Columbus has only been able to use the survey data to assess service quality across the entire city or in imprecise comparisons between the central city and suburban areas. The 2002 survey gathered responses by each of the City's 12 service districts. Consequently, the information included in this report can be used not only to assess whether services are improving or declining relative to past years, but also whether there are important performance differences across service districts that deserve attention. Columbus is one of only a handful of cities nationwide that utilize this cutting edge management tool.

As has been the case in previous satisfaction surveys, this year's survey asks respondents about a variety of government service related issues. In particular, the survey asks citizens to:

- Identify what they like best about Columbus and what challenges they think lie ahead;

- Assess the quality of a range of primary public services, including fire prevention, emergency medical services, refuse collection, park maintenance, recreational programs, police services, drinking water, drainage, street lighting, snow removal, and street maintenance;

- Assess the City's performance on meeting many of the Strategic Goals identified in the Columbus Covenant;

- Report their awareness of many new City initiatives, like Cap City Kids and Neighborhood Liaisons; and,

- Indicate their preference for the types of services they would like to see offered by different agencies.

After a discussion of the methodology in **section 2**, the bulk of this document reports the results from the survey in both tabular and graphic format. The results are presented in sections 3-5. **Section 3** examines responses to key city-wide questions (i.e. what is the biggest challenge facing Columbus). Many of the tables in this subsection provide comparisons to previous survey results. As a general rule, the historic comparisons are made to 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000, but not 1995 since these results closely mirror the 1996 responses. **Section 4** analyzes the results as they relate to the Strategic Goals of the Columbus Covenant. The first of the Strategic Goals examined is Neighborhood Development. This is where the bulk of the comparisons are made across neighborhood service districts. In fact, the analysis includes a summary of the major results in each of the 12 neighborhood service districts. **Section 5** presents results by different City departments with a particular focus on relevant performance measures for each department. The document concludes with a series of appendices, including the survey instrument (Appendix A) and the response frequencies (Appendix B).

2. Methodology

The City of Columbus 2002 Satisfaction Survey is based on telephone interviews of 1188 randomly selected adults throughout the City. The interviews were conducted from July 15 to August 19, 2002.

A random sample of computer-generated telephone numbers was used to reach households throughout the City regardless of whether their number was listed or unlisted. Within each household, one English-speaking adult was selected by a random procedure to be the respondent for the survey. All interviewing was completed from the Ohio State University Center for Survey Research. The average interview length was 26.5 minutes.

A total of 7,790 randomly generated telephone numbers were used for this survey. The numbers were called as many as 10 times trying to reach an eligible respondent at a time that was convenient for the respondent. Of these, 3,358 numbers were found to be non-working numbers, businesses, or households outside of the City of Columbus. The remaining 4,432 numbers were *presumed* to reach a household in the City with an eligible respondent. Of these households, interviews were completed in 27% of the cases.[1] Among those households for which it is known that interviewers actually spoke with the eligible adult respondent, interviews were completed in 83% of the cases.[2]

In theory, in 19 out of 20 cases, the results for this sample of residents will differ due to sampling error by no more than 2.8 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all adults in the city. In addition, all surveys are subject to other potential sources of imprecision and bias which may be associated with the question wording and/or ordering, response rate, and the quality of the interviewers, for example, that could lead to somewhat different results from the present findings. Table 2.1 on the next page shows the margin of sampling error by neighborhood service division.

[1] AAPOR Response Rate 1, the most conservative calculation. The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2000. Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys. Ann Arbor, Michigan: AAPOR.

[2] AAPOR Cooperation Rate 1, the most conservative calculation.

Table 2.1
Sample Size and Margin of Sampling Error by Neighborhood Service Division

Area	Sample Size	Margin of Sampling Error
(1) Westland	72	+/- 11.5
(2) Greater Hilltop/Southwest	123	+/- 8.8
(3) Franklinton	52	+/- 13.5
(4) University/Village Area	234	+/- 6.4
(5) Brewery/German Village/Southside	85	+/- 10.6
(6) Clintonville/Northwest	140	+/- 8.2
(7) Far East	115	+/- 9.1
(8) Near East	67	+/- 11.9
(9) North Central	61	+/- 12.5
(10) Far Northeast	102	+/- 9.7
(11) Northeast	59	+/- 12.7
(12) Linden	78	+/- 11.0
City of Columbus	**1188**	**+/- 2.8 percentage points**

One way to address sample bias is to weight the results by key demographic factors. In the case of the 2002 survey the results were weighted to take into account the number of adults and the number of telephone lines in each household and adjust for variations in the sample by weighting for area of residence, gender, age, race, education, and whether or not any children under the age of 18 lived in the household. The weighted data were compared to the unweighted raw data to verify the accuracy of the unweighted data. In a sense, weighting was used to check for accuracy. The next section presents a comparison of weighted versus unweighted responses to show the degree of difference. In the majority of cases, the weighted data are not substantively different from the unweighted data suggesting that the unweighted data are not highly biased. Table 2.2 on the next page reports the demographics of the sample drawn with the techniques discussed above.

Table 2.2
2002 Satisfaction Survey
Respondent Demographics

Demographic	Percent (count)	Demographic	Percent (count)
Gender		**Race**	
Female	60.1% (714)	White	63.9% (759)
Male	39.9% (474)	Black	28.9% (343)
Age		All other	7.2% (86)
18-29	27.9% (327)	**Employment Status**	
30-44	29.5% (345)	Employed full-time	57.0% (620)
45-59	22.3% (261)	Employed part-time	9.0% (98)
60 and older	20.3% (238)	Unemployed	2.7% (29)
Education		Retired	19.4% (211)
Less than high school	10.0% (118)	Student	5.1% (55)
High school graduate	26.0% (307)	Homemaker	6.9% (75)
Some college	30.5% (361)	**Marital Status**	
College graduate	33.6% (397)	Married/cohabitating	34.7% (411)
Household Income		Divorced	11.2% (133)
Less $20,000	30.0% (317)	Separated	1.9% (22)
$20,001-$30,000	16.6% (175)	Single	43.3% (513)
$30,001-$50,000	25.2% (266)	Widowed	8.9% (106)
$50,001-$75,000	16.3% (172)	**Voter Status**	
$75,001 or higher	11.9% (126)	Registered to vote	76.6% (908)

A unique challenge of this year's survey was the ability to connect the survey data to the 12 neighborhood service areas. The first step was to screen households for residence in the City. Respondents were first asked for their zip code. Residents of the following zip codes were considered city residents without further screening: 43201, 43202, 43205, 43206, 43210, 43211, 43214, 43215, and 43222. Residents of the following zip code areas were outside the city and interviews were terminated: 43054, 43004, 43017, 43002, 43064, 43146, and 43217. Residents living in other zip codes were then asked if their household was within Columbus city limits. Other screening criteria such as paying taxes to the City of Columbus were rejected because positive responses did not guarantee Columbus residence. The second step of the data connection process was to collect address information from respondents. These data were processed using geographic information systems software to verify that households were actually within Columbus city limits and assign them to one of the neighborhood service areas. Appendix C reports the demographic information listed in Table 2.2 above by each of the 12 neighborhood service divisions.

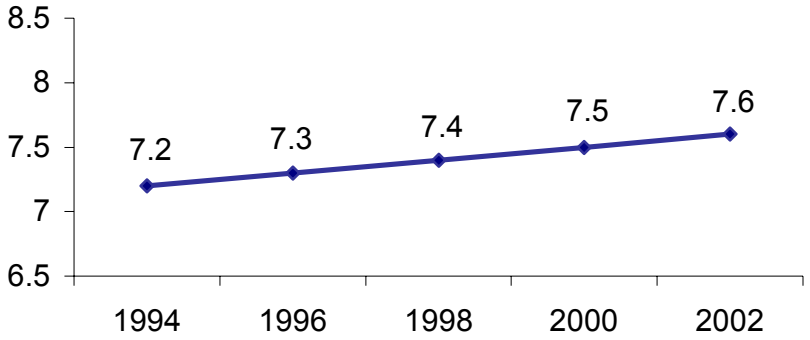
3. Results – City-Wide Issues

A. Overall Quality of Life

Quality of life continues to improve…..

Every two years since the first survey in 1994, respondents report a gradual increase in the overall quality of life in the City of Columbus. On a 10-point scale where 1 means "very poor quality" and 10 means "very high quality," the average rating in 2002 is 7.6 as compared with 7.2 in 1994, 7.3 in 1996, 7.4 in 1998, and 7.5 in 2000. Figure 3.1 reports these results graphically.

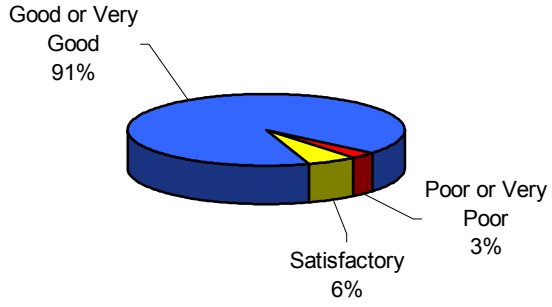
Figure 3.1
Average Quality of Life Rating in Columbus
1994-2002



…and quality of life is good.

The vast majority of respondents report that their quality of life is good. Figure 3.2 reports quality of life ratings when the 10-point scale is collapsed into three categories ranging from "poor or very poor" (scale ratings of 1 to 4) to "satisfactory" (scale rating of 5) to "good or very good" (scale ratings of 6 to 10).

Figure 3.2
Ratings of Quality of Life in Columbus



This is also an improvement from previous surveys. In 2002, 91% of respondents indicated that their quality of life was "good or very good" compared with 89% in 2000, 86% in 1998, and 70% in 1994.

Differences across Subgroups

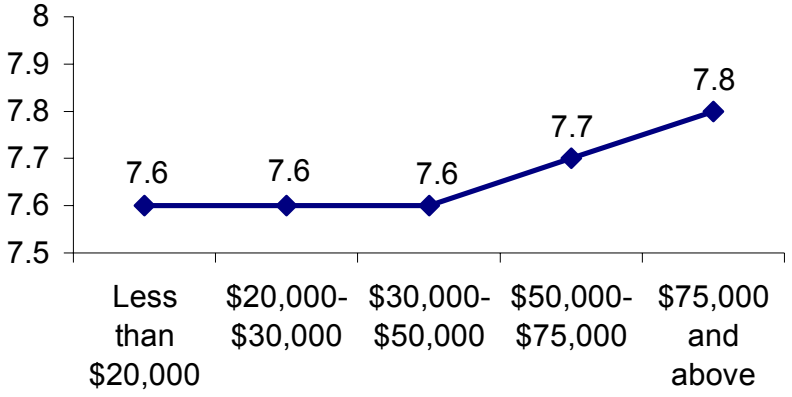
The quality of life gap between African Americans and whites has disappeared….

Quality of life increases reach across subgroups. Quality of life ratings have increased for both African American and white respondents. The average quality of life rating for African American respondents in 2002 is 7.6, up from 7.4 in 2000 and 7.2 in 1998. Similarly, the average quality of life rating for white respondents is also 7.6, the same as in 2000, but up from 7.5 in 1998. In terms of average quality of life ratings the gap between African Americans and whites has disappeared.

…but things continue to get better with age.

Quality of life has also improved across age groups. The 2000 survey distinguished between those above and below 40 years of age. In 2000, respondents less than 40 reported an average quality of life rating of 7.3 compared to 7.5 in 2002. In addition, in 2002, respondents over 40 report an average quality of life rating of 7.8, up from 7.6 in 2000. The gap between age groups becomes more prominent when comparing respondents 60 and older to younger respondents. In 2002, those above 60 report an average quality of life rating of 7.9 compared to 7.6 for those younger than 60.

Figure 3.3
Quality of Life Ratings by Income



Another interesting progression emerges when income status is examined. As Figure 3.3 reports, respondents with higher incomes have higher quality of life ratings. Notably, respondents with income levels above $75,000 report an average quality of life rating of 7.8, while those with income levels below $50,000 have an rating of 7.6.

B. What Citizens Like Best about Columbus

A majority of respondents like Columbus' diversity of activities and quality of life.

According to the survey results reported in Table 3.1, Columbus has lots to offer. When asked what they like best about Columbus, the majority of respondents indicate the diversity of activities (32%) and the overall quality of life (29%). A smaller portion of respondents highlight economic factors, like a vibrant local economy and job market (9%) or the low cost of living and taxes (5%).

Table 3.1
What Citizens Like Best About Columbus 2002[3]

Diversity of Activities[4]	32%
Quality of Life[5]	29%
Local Economy and Job Market	9%
My Home and Family	7%
Low Cost of Living and Taxes	5%
Do Not Like Columbus	3%
Other[6]	15%

At a more personal level, 7% of respondents indicate that their family or their home is the most desirable aspect of life in Columbus. Only 3% of respondents indicate that they do not like living in Columbus and 15% report some other aspect of life in Columbus that makes it an attractive place to live.

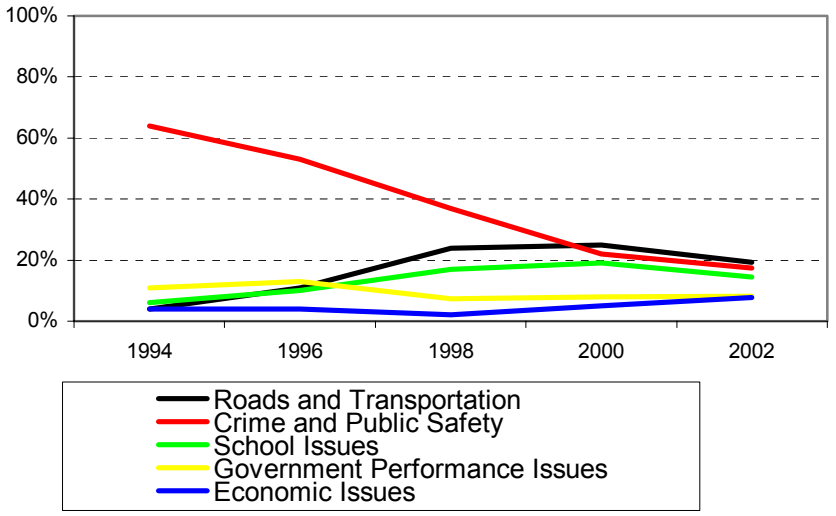
C. The Most Important Challenges Facing Columbus

While respondents are increasingly satisfied with their quality of life, they also report that there are important challenges facing Columbus that must be addressed to ensure continued overall satisfaction. Some of these are issues that the City of Columbus can work to improve, like the quality of roads and transportation. In other cases the City has fewer means to improve conditions, like the condition of the economy.

[3] Multiple responses allowed. Table based on 1205 responses.
[4] Category includes entertainment, recreation, shopping, and arts.
[5] Category includes local culture.
[6] Other combines categories that receive less than 2% of the total response.

Figure 3.4 and Table 3.2 (on the next page) report the top five challenges indicated by respondents when asked what is the most important challenge facing Columbus. The results of previous surveys are reported for purposes of comparison.[7]

Figure 3.4
Most Important Challenges Facing the City of Columbus -- 1994-2002



Public safety and crime continue to recede as challenges facing Columbus….

On the positive side, crime and public safety continue to recede as an important challenge facing the city. In 1994, 64% of respondents indicated that this was the most important challenge. In 2002, 17% of respondents report crime and public safety as the most important challenge, a drop from 22% only two years earlier in 2000. This mirrors the overall national trend. However, it is important to highlight that crime rates and concern about crime have recently spiked in other major metropolitan cities like Boston and Philadelphia, but not in Columbus.

Concern with issues of government performance appears to have stabilized. While 11% of respondents in 1994 and 13% in 1996 reported that the biggest challenge facing Columbus was poor government performance (i.e. inefficient government spending), this number has remained steady since. Only 8% of respondents in 2002 indicate that this is a major challenge.

[7] Two responses were allowed. Note that the phrasing of the question has changed slightly from "most important problem" in previous iterations of the survey to "most important challenge" in the current version.

Table 3.2
Most Important Challenges Facing Columbus
1994-2002

	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002
Roads and Transportation	4%	11%	24%	25%	19%
Crime and Public Safety	64%	53%	37%	22%	17%
School Issues[8]	6%	10%	17%	19%	15%
Government Performance[9]	11%	13%	7%	8%	8%
Economic Issues	4%	4%	2%	5%	8%
Other Issues	11%	9%	13%	21%	33%

...while economic issues are increasingly a primary concern of Columbus residents.

On the negative side, citizens are increasingly concerned about the state of the economy. In 1994, only 4% of respondents reported economic issues as the most important challenge. By 2002, that percentage has doubled to 8%. In addition, citizens remain concerned with roads and transportation. From 1994 to 2002, the percentage of respondents that indicate that roads and transportation is the most important challenge has grown from less than 5% to around one-fifth of all respondents. While this is a decrease from 1996 and 1998, almost 5% of respondents in 2002 indicate that the city is growing too fast (included in the "other issues" category), further suggesting that citizens are concerned about the management of growth and infrastructure. School issues also remain a primary concern, with 15% of respondents citing issues like school funding and quality as the most important challenge.

Finally, it is important to point out that the "other issues" category has grown dramatically from 1994 (11%) to 2002 (33%). This category combines issues that receive less than 5% of the overall responses. The majority of these issues receive less than 1% of the overall responses. The growth in the diversity of "other" responses is likely due to both the diminishment of primary local concerns like crime, and the increasing number of challenges confronting the city during a period of uncertainty due to war abroad and a national economic downturn.

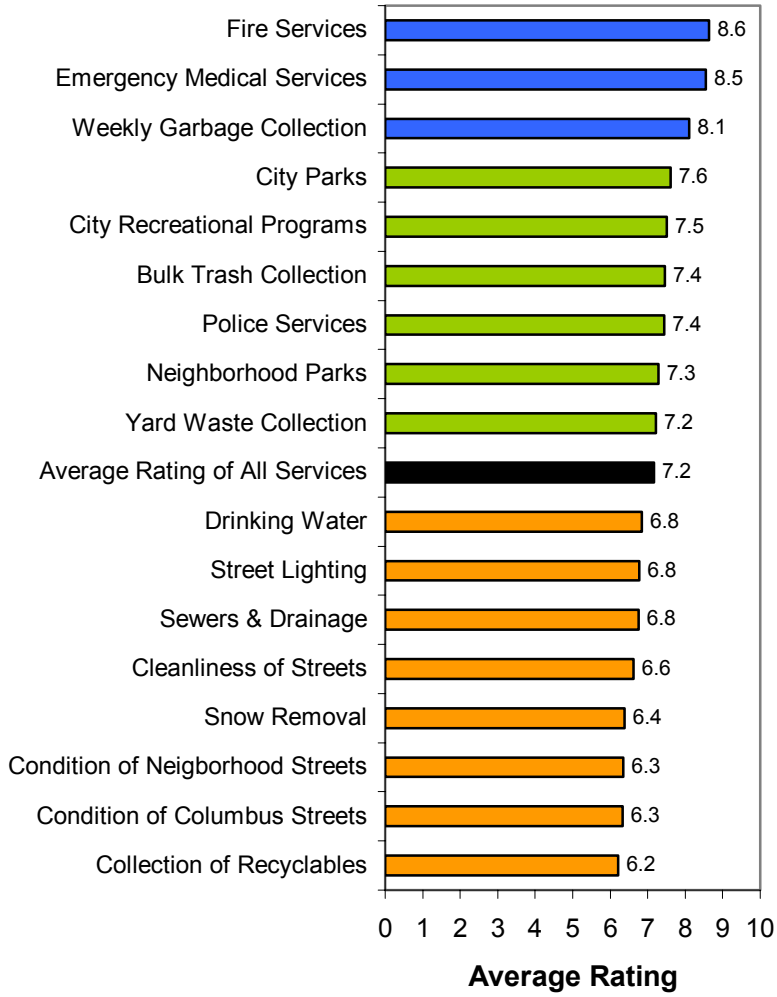
[8] This category includes school performance, busing, funding, infrastructure, access and other school related issues.
[9] This category includes issues related to poor city planning, garbage and recycling, and wasted taxes and government spending.

D. Citizen Evaluation of the Quality of City Services

Citizens give high marks to fire and emergency medical services…

Citizen evaluation of the quality of public services is a key benchmark of government performance. As primary consumers of public services, citizens are well positioned to assess whether they are receiving value for their tax dollars. Since the first survey in 1994, the City of Columbus has asked residents to evaluate the quality of several public services. Citizens were asked to rate each of 17 services on a 10-point scale, where 1 means "very poor quality" and 10 means "very high quality." Figure 3.5 reports the results for 2002.

Figure 3.5
Service Quality Ratings 2002



While all of the services are ranked positively (6 or above), citizens give the highest marks to fire services (8.6), emergency medical services (8.5), and garbage collection (8.1). Citizens give the lowest

marks to the collection of recyclables (6.2), the condition of streets in their neighborhood (6.3), and the condition of streets in greater Columbus (6.3). Note that while citizens rate garbage collection – a service provided directly by the city – as one of the top three services, citizens rate collection of recyclables – a service provided by a contractor – as one of the bottom three services. In general, the City's overall trash collection program gets high marks, with bulk trash collection receiving a 7.4 and yard waste collection receiving a 7.2.

...and the trend is toward continued improvement across the vast majority of services.

Table 3.3 reports changes in service ratings over time.[10] Overall, service performance continues to improve. The average service rating is 7.2, up from 7.0 in 1996.

Table 3.3
Quality of Columbus City Services
1996-2002

	1996	1998	2000	2002	
Fire Services	8.5	8.4	8.4	8.6	▲
Emergency Medical Services	8.3	8.1	8.3	8.5	▲
Weekly Garbage Collection	7.5	7.9	7.8	8.1	▲
City Parks in General	7.1	7.2	7.7	7.6	▼
City's Recreational Programs	6.9	7.0	7.4	7.5	▲
Police Services	7.1	7.0	7.1	7.4	▲
Bulk Trash Collection	6.4	7.0	7.2	7.4	▲
Parks in Your Neighborhood	6.8	6.9	7.6	7.3	▼
Yard Waste Collection	--	6.9	7.0	7.2	▲
Drinking Water	6.7	6.4	6.6	6.8	▲
Sewers & Drainage	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.8	▲
Cleanliness of Roads & Streets	--	6.5	6.6	6.6	□
Snow Removal	5.4	6.0	5.7	6.4	▲
Condition of Columbus Streets	5.4	5.6	5.5	6.3	▲
Condition of Neighborhood Streets	5.9	6.2	6.5	6.3	▼
Collection of Recyclables	--	6.0	6.0	6.2	▲
Average Service Rating	**7.0**	**7.1**	**7.1**	**7.2**	▲

[10] Comparative data for 1994 are not available. Only those services that have been tracked since 1998 are included in this table.

Twelve services have higher average service ratings than the previous survey in 2000, while only three services show any drop-off. In fact, some services have posted strong improvements. Notably, snow removal has jumped from 5.7 in 2000 to 6.4 in 2002 and the condition of streets in greater Columbus has increased from 5.5 to 6.3 in the same time period.

While the condition of streets receives a low mark, it has made the biggest improvement of all the services.

The low scores for the condition of streets in Columbus and in neighborhoods combined with the finding that almost 20% of respondents indicate that roads and transportation are the most important challenge suggest that citizens are concerned about transportation infrastructure. This is logical given the considerable amount of construction throughout the Columbus metropolitan area. As noted in the previous paragraph, the good news is that residents think conditions and the City's performance on these issues are improving.

Weighting

As noted in the methodology section, weighting the data by factors such as age, race, and education can increase the reliability of the results. Through weighting, the data become more representative of the population surveyed. Relying on unweighted data can lead to either underestimation or overestimation. For example, Table 3.4 (on the next page) compares average citizen ratings with both weighted and unweighted data for each of the 17 public services reported earlier, as well as the average rating for all services.

In about half of the cases the ratings do not change. In particular, the average service rating remains the same at 7.2. In the majority of the other instances, ratings increase with weighted data (noted in blue). This means that using the unweighted data results in an underestimation in average rating for these services. In one instance – snow removal (noted in red) – the rating decreases with the weighted data. This means that using the unweighted data results in an overestimation in the average rating for this service. While none of the changes are dramatic, over time the results can be substantive.

However, improvements in data reliability come at the expense of substantive comparability with unweighted surveys from previous years. In the case of this survey it is inaccurate to compare weighted data from 2002 to unweighted data from 2000. For example, a change from 6 in 2000 to 7 in 2002 in the quality of snow removal is not necessarily an actual improvement in snow removal services. The increase may simply be attributable to the weighting formula.

Table 3.4
Quality of Columbus City Services
Weighted versus Unweighted Responses
2002

	Weighted	Unweighted
Fire Services	8.7	8.6
Emergency Medical Services	8.6	8.5
Weekly Garbage Collection	8.2	8.1
City Parks in General	7.6	7.6
City's Recreational Programs	7.5	7.5
Police Services	7.4	7.4
Bulk Trash Collection	7.5	7.4
Parks in Your Neighborhood	7.3	7.3
Yard Waste Collection	7.3	7.2
Drinking Water	6.9	6.8
Sewers & Drainage	6.8	6.8
Cleanliness of Roads & Streets	6.7	6.6
Snow Removal	6.3	6.4
Condition of Columbus Streets	6.3	6.3
Condition of Neighborhood Streets	6.4	6.3
Collection of Recyclables	6.2	6.2
Average Service Rating	7.2	7.2

In sum, weighted data is preferable to unweighted data in terms of its accuracy, but it eliminates the possibility of making meaningful comparisons to previous unweighted survey data.